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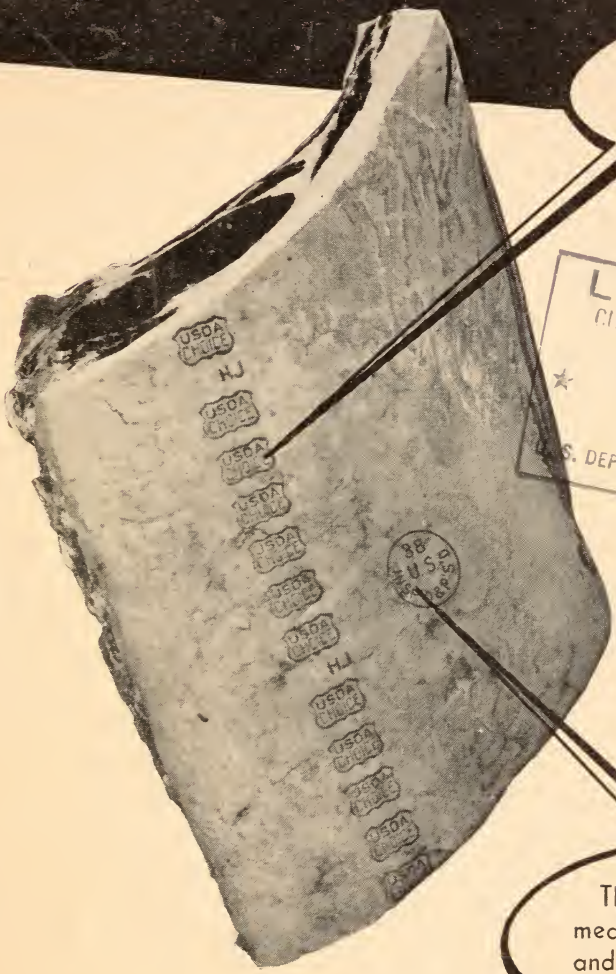
U. S. GRADES FOR BEEF



This stamp shows that the meat was Federally graded.

This stamp shows that the meat was Federally inspected and passed as wholesome food.

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LEAFLET NO. 310

ORIGIN AND DEVELOPMENT OF FEDERAL GRADING OF MEAT

The Federal grading and stamping of beef was started by the U. S. Department of Agriculture on May 1, 1927. The initial request for establishing a grading service originated with a producer organization known as the Better Beef Association. The Association was made up of producers and their representatives from all of the leading cattle producing areas. It was their conclusion that some official yardstick for measuring quality was needed to give the consumer-buyer confidence in his purchase and, indirectly, thereby to encourage the production of better beef cattle.

At the outset, the Department set up a beef grading program on an experimental basis in 10 major meat market centers. In 1928, the service was established on a self-supporting basis by charging fees for the service to packers requesting grading. From this very small beginning, grading was extended to include veal, calf, lamb, and mutton and the demand for graded meats has continued to increase to the extent that, at present (1955), a staff of some 400 graders is required to perform the services requested by the trade. Grading service is now available in practically every section of the United States wherever livestock are slaughtered and meat is sold.

All segments of the livestock and meat industry, from producer to consumer, benefit from the nationwide Federal meat grading program because it contributes greatly to the overall efficiency of marketing.

This leaflet supersedes Leaflet 122, U. S. Graded and Stamped Meat.

Revised April, 1955

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U. S. GRADES FOR BEEF

The purpose of this leaflet is to give consumers and others a brief explanation of United States grades for beef—and to show how the selection of meat can be made easier for the consumer-buyer—from the most inexperienced homemakers to the large quantity users of meat.

Success in preparing any meat dish—the concern of all cooks—begins with the selection of a suitable quality and cut of meat. The second step toward assuring success is the preparation of the meat by an appropriate method.

To provide consumers with a reliable guide to meat quality, the United States Department of Agriculture for many years has made Federal meat grading available on a voluntary basis except in times of national emergency when compulsory grading may be required.

This leaflet summarizes facts about the United States grades for carcass beef and points out how they can be used as an aid in more efficient purchasing.

FEDERAL MEAT GRADES AID CONSUMERS

The Federal grade stamp on meat provides consumers with a reliable guide to quality.

Each grade name is associated with a specific degree of quality, thus enabling consumers to utilize meat most efficiently by preparing it in the manner for which it is best suited.

FEDERAL MEAT STAMPS

The Federal grade stamp on meat is easily identified. It is a purple ribbonlike stamp that appears on practically all retail cuts.

Do not confuse the Federal grade stamp with the Federal meat inspection stamp either in appearance or in meaning. Federal grade names (Prime, Choice, Good, etc.) are enclosed in a shield and appear on beef as a ribbonlike stamp. This grade stamp denotes the quality. The round stamp, which reads "U. S. INS'D & P'S'D," is the symbol of Federal meat inspection and is your assurance that the meat was wholesome at the time it was inspected. The illustration on the cover page shows the two stamps.

MEAT SELECTION

Quality in meat is highly variable and is most difficult to recognize in retail cuts. The meat grader, who places the Federal grade stamp on meat, is an expert in judging meat quality.

Learn the grade that is best suited to your needs. Remember, also, that the proper selection of cuts is important. A Good grade T-bone steak, for example, will be more tender than a Choice grade round steak.

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FEDERAL BEEF GRADES

There are seven official grades for carcass beef. Five of these—Prime, Choice, Good, Commercial, and Utility—may be found in retail stores. Most retailers sell only the grade or grades that are requested or deemed to meet the needs of their customers. The grade name appearing on the grade stamp can be used to serve the consumer in two important ways—(1) as a guide to quality and (2) as a guide to preparation.

Beef of each grade will provide a satisfactory dish if appropriately cooked. The degree of quality which is associated with each of the grades is briefly discussed in the paragraphs that follow:

As the name implies, beef of this grade is highly acceptable and palatable. Prime grade beef is produced from young and well-fed beef-type cattle. The youth of the animal and the careful intensive feeding which it has had, combine to produce very high quality cuts of beef. Such cuts have liberal quantities of fat interspersed within the lean (marbling). These characteristics contribute greatly to the juiciness, tenderness, and flavor of the meat. Rib roasts and loin steaks of this grade are consistently tender and cuts from the round and chuck should also be highly satisfactory.

This grade is preferred by most consumers because it is of high quality but has less fat than beef of the Prime grade. More of this grade of beef is produced than of any other grade. Choice grade beef is usually available the year-round in substantial quantity. Roasts and steaks from the loin and rib are tender and juicy and other cuts, such as those from the round or chuck which are more suitable for braising and pot roasting, should be tender with a well-developed flavor.

This grade pleases thrifty homemakers who seek beef with little fat but with an acceptable degree of quality. Although cuts of this grade lack the juiciness associated with a higher degree of fatness, their relative tenderness and high proportion of lean to fat make them the preference of many people.

Beef that is graded Commercial is produced largely from older animals and usually lacks the tenderness of the higher grades. Cuts from this grade, if carefully prepared, can be made into satisfactory and economical meat dishes. Most cuts require long, slow cooking with moist heat to make them tender and to develop the rich, full, beef flavor characteristic of mature beef.

Some young animals produce beef of Commercial grade. Cuts from carcasses of such animals have a very thin fat covering and are practically devoid of marbling.

Beef of this grade is produced mostly from cattle somewhat advanced in age and is usually lacking in natural tenderness and juiciness. The cuts of this grade, as they appear in the retail markets, carry very little fat but provide a palatable, economical source of lean meat for pot roasting, stewing, boiling, or ground-meat dishes. For satisfactory results, long, slow cooking by moist heat is essential.

OTHER GRADES

There are also two other grades of beef—Cutter and Canner. These are ordinarily used in processed meat products and are rarely, if ever, sold as cuts in retail stores.

OTHER MEATS GRADED

Veal, calf, lamb, and mutton are also federally graded. In addition to the grade name that identifies the quality of the meat, the kind of meat is also indicated as veal, calf, yearling mutton, and mutton. This identification appears with the grade stamp on retail cuts.

BUYING MEAT IN QUANTITY

Discriminating buyers who order large quantities of meat and who want uniformity of quality in their purchases find the Acceptance Service performed by meat graders very helpful.

Under this service, the Livestock Division of the Agricultural Marketing Service assists purchasing agencies in preparing specifications to fit requirements or preferences and selects meat for them in accordance with such specifications. Upon acceptance each piece of meat or package is stamped with a special stamp to indicate that the product complies with the purchasing agency's specifications.

SUGGESTED COOKING GUIDE

The use of an appropriate method of cooking is essential to bring out the desirable eating qualities of the specific cut and grade selected. Below is a guide suggesting the most generally accepted method of cooking retail cuts of beef of each grade.

Flank, plate, brisket, foreshank, and the heel of the round should be prepared in the same manner for all grades of beef. These less tender cuts are used for stewing, braising, pot roasting, or boiling, or are ground for use in meat loaves and similar dishes.

CUT	PRIME	CHOICE	GOOD	COMMERCIAL	UTILITY
Bottom round	Braise or pot roast	Braise or pot roast	Braise or pot roast	Braise or pot roast	Braise or pot roast.
Top round	Broil, pan fry, or braise.	Broil, pan fry, or braise.	Braise	Braise	Braise.
Rump	Roast or pot roast	Roast or pot roast	Pot roast	Pot roast	Pot roast.
Sirloin	Broil or roast	Broil or roast	Broil or roast	Broil, pan fry, or braise.	Braise.
Porterhouse	Broil	Broil	Broil	Broil, pan fry, or braise.	Braise.
T-bone	Broil	Broil	Broil	Broil, pan fry, or braise.	Braise.
Club	Broil	Broil	Broil	Broil, pan fry, or braise.	Braise.
Rib roast	Roast	Roast	Roast	Roast or pot roast	Pot roast.
Blade chuck	Roast or pot roast	Roast or pot roast	Pot roast	Pot roast	Pot roast.
Shoulder arm roast	Roast or pot roast	Pot roast	Pot roast	Pot roast	Pot roast.

LOCATION OF BEEF CUTS

1 HIND SHANK
a. Soup bones
b. Hock

2 ROUND
a. Round steaks or roasts
b. Pot roast

3 RUMP
Roasts or steaks

4 LOIN END
Sirloin steaks or roasts

5 SHORT LOIN
a. Porterhouse steaks
b. T-bone steaks
c. Club or Delmonico steaks

6 FLANK
a. Flank steak
b. Stew or ground beef

7 RIB
a. Rib roasts or steaks
b. Short ribs

8 CHUCK
a. Chuck rib roasts or steaks
b. Arm pot roasts or steaks
c. Stew or ground beef

9 PLATE
a. Stew, ground beef, or boned and rolled pot roasts
b. Short ribs

10 BRISKET
Stew or boned and rolled pot roasts

11 FORE SHANK
Soup bones or ground beef

POINTS TO REMEMBER

1. Grades are based on definite Federal grade standards that are applied by highly skilled, impartial, Federal meat graders in the same uniform manner from season to season and year to year without regard to supply and demand or other economic conditions.

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2. The long ribbonlike stamp with the grade name enclosed in a shield indicates the quality. The round stamp indicates the meat is wholesome. Do not confuse the stamps.

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3. Remember that all the grades are good for some purpose. When planning a meal, first decide the type of meat dish to be prepared, and then select the cut and the grade that will assure satisfaction.

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4. Appropriate cuts of the Prime, Choice, or Good grades should be selected if the beef is to be roasted or broiled. Cuts of the other two grades—Commercial or Utility—may prove equally satisfactory for pot roasts, stews, or in ground meat dishes.

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5. Carefully look at the meat you buy to see if it has been graded. Meat is federally graded only on request. The retail market can get graded meat if you asked for it.

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